

B2

embodiment, the ionic crosslinking is made by aluminate ions,  
[Al(OH)<sub>4</sub>]<sup>-</sup>.

Page 6, replace the paragraph beginning on line 12 as follows:

--Preferably, the crosslinking agent is an aluminate ion, [Al(OH)<sub>4</sub>]<sup>-</sup> in accordance with what is disclosed in the German patent application no. 198-18852.8 filed the same day. When producing such a superabsorbent, aluminate ions are added to a water-containing gel of a carboxy group containing polymer, e.g., a polyacrylate, which preferably is crosslinked by means of covalent bonds in a conventional way. The gel is crosslinked with the aluminate ions before drying to a powder or granules, at which a homogeneously ionically crosslinked hydrogel structure is obtained.

B3

Page 6, replace the paragraph beginning on line 20 as follows:

--When a superabsorbent absorbs liquid and swells, the covalent bonds to the crosslinking agent are successively broken up, which leads to that the superabsorbent loses its gel stability in connection with the swelling. A superabsorbent, however, which is surface crosslinked or homogeneously crosslinked by an ionic crosslinking agent, maintains its gel stability after swelling in a better way, due to that the ionic bonds can be rearranged and recreated as the polymer swells, which a covalent bond is not able to do.

B4

Page 8, replace the paragraph beginning on line 1 as follows:

--The superabsorbents that were used were a commercially available superabsorbent from Clariant GmbH named Sanwet IM 7100 and three different test substances of a polyacrylate homogeneously crosslinked by aluminate ions according to above and which besides was covalently crosslinked. The test substances were named E271/97, E214/97 and E222/97 and were supplied by Clariant GmbH and Clariant Corp. --.

Page 9, replace the paragraph beginning on line 8 as follows:

--Pouches of polyester net 7x12 cm were prepared. 0.2 g of superabsorbent were weighed and placed in the pouches, which were welded and weighed. The pouches were immersed in synthetic urine during 60 minutes after which they were taken up, were allowed to drain and were weighed. The difference in weight after and before absorption gives the free swell capacity. --.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Cancel claims 1-12.

Add the following new claims:

~~13. (new) An absorbent structure in an absorbent article selected from the group consisting of a diaper, a pant diaper, an incontinence guard, and a sanitary napkin, said structure comprising a combination of a porous material selected from the group consisting of fibers, foam and mixtures thereof,~~

and a superabsorbent material, wherein the absorbent structure contains at least 50% by weight of superabsorbent material, based on the total weight of the structure in dry condition in at least one area thereof in which the superabsorbent material is distributed; said superabsorbent material being crosslinked by ionic bonds and being in the form of a powder, grains or granules.

--14. (new) The absorbent structure according to claim 13, wherein the superabsorbent material is also covalently cross-linked.

--15. (new) The absorbent structure according to claim 13, wherein the superabsorbent material comprises a polymer with anionic functional groups.

--16. (new) The absorbent structure according to claim 15, wherein the superabsorbent material is a crosslinked polymer of a polyacrylate having functional carboxy groups.

--17. (new) The absorbent structure according to claim 15, wherein the superabsorbent material is crosslinked with a cationic crosslinking agent by cations which are bonded to the anionic functional groups of the superabsorbent material via ionic bonds.

--18. (new) The absorbent structure according to claim 17, wherein the cationic crosslinking agent comprises a polyvalent metal ion.

--19. (new) The absorbent structure according to claim 18, wherein the metal ion is aluminum, zirconium, chromium, titanium or zinc.

--20. (new) The absorbent structure according to claim 17, wherein the crosslinking agent is an aluminate ion.

B7

--21. (new) The absorbent structure according to claim 13, wherein the superabsorbent material is surface crosslinked by an ionic crosslinking agent.

--22. (new) The absorbent structure according to claim 21, wherein the superabsorbent material is substantially homogeneously crosslinked with the ionic crosslinking agent.

--23. (new) The absorbent structure according to claim 13, wherein the absorbent structure contains at least 70% by weight of superabsorbent material, calculated on the total weight of the structure in dry condition in at least one area thereof in which the superabsorbent material is distributed.

--24. (new) An absorbent article selected from the group consisting of a diaper, a pant diaper, an incontinence guard, and a sanitary napkin, the article comprising a liquid